INTRODUCTIONS OF PACIFIC GIANT CLAMS IN THE CARIBBEAN AND EFFORTS TO PREVENT DISEASE INTRODUCTIONS

ERNEST H. WILLIAMS, JR. AND LUCY B. WILLIAMS

Caribbean Aquatic Animal Health Project
Department of Marine Sciences
University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez, Puerto Rico

Hundreds, possibly thousands, of giant clams (*Tridacna* spp.) are being cultured commercially in the Caribbean, possibly without any screening for diseases. To our knowledge, more than 600 specimens are being cultured in Bonaire (Netherlands Antilles), others in Guadeloupe and south Florida (USA), while we have unconfirmed reports of other projects in the Caribbean, and of planned demonstration projects in north Florida. The Bonaire and Florida clams are from Palau, Micronesia. We do not know if any of these animals were tested for pathogens. We are interested in contacting all of these culture projects rearing giant clams in the Atlantic to arrange proper disease screening. We believe there is an urgent need to avoid introducing pathogens that may harm the conduct and reputation of aquaculture or damage Caribbean fisheries. We advocate testing, but do not condone the introduction of *Tridacna* spp. outside their previous natural ranges. This is merely the most practical approach to minimize possible damage. The Caribbean Aquatic Animal Health Project (Telephone 809-899-2048, ext. 211; Emergency Pager 800-462-8124) does not have the authority to prohibit introduction of, or to certify disease-free stocks of *Tridacna* spp., but we do seek to establish beneficial cooperation between those who are holding these animals in the Atlantic and those working on their biology and diseases. We would be grateful for any information that would help in locating the Atlantic projects, arranging for disease screening, if necessary, and preparing to control any disease problems, which may subsequently arise.

II Congreso de Ciencias del Mar, Havana, Cuba